

TOUCHING DOWN AT MID-WAY



A Mid-Term Progress Report

2015



GAINING TRACTION

*Virginia's Strategy for
Propelling the Prevention
of Youth Substance Abuse*





COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

John W. Marshall
Secretary of Public Safety

June 21, 2005

Marilyn P. Harris
Director
Substance Abuse Prevention

Greetings from Virginia's Prevention Community!

We are pleased to provide this update to our 2003 comprehensive strategic planning document, *"Gaining Traction: A Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Virginia's Youth."* The progress reported in the following pages attests to the remarkable strides Virginia's statewide prevention community has made toward implementation of the 16 recommendations made in our original plan document. Technically, this "mid-point" update of our five-year plan is being issued five months ahead of schedule, due to the accelerated pace of our progress-to-date toward accomplishment of our overall strategic objectives. Accordingly, Virginia's prevention community is well on its way to completing this implementation work almost a year earlier than envisioned – in 2007 rather than 2008. We have many devoted and committed prevention specialists, providers and managers to thank for this achievement.

Throughout the implementation process, our overarching emphasis has been focused on establishing and strengthening collaboration and formalizing the statewide administration, management, capacity-building and accountability of prevention programs. These programs contribute to positive youth development and target substance abuse and violence prevention among Virginia's children and adolescents.

Key examples of improved statewide collaboration include the growing success of our annual KIDS*afe* Virginia Prevention Conferences and the enthusiastic, "hands-on" implementation of our *"Gaining Traction"* planning imperatives by all of our state agency prevention managers who comprise the GOSAP Collaborative. Local collaboration has been expanded by strengthening existing bonds with the many local prevention coalitions in communities throughout Virginia, prevention experts within the 40 Community Services Boards statewide, the Community Builders Network, the GOSAP Council of local prevention providers and our ongoing links with prevention specialists in the faith, private and non-profit sectors. The success of our strategic planning model and process has informed and influenced other planners of youth services who are working within these same realms. Consistent with our strategic recommendations and the GOSAP's legislative mandate, we are increasing uniformity and accountability within the application, management, and reporting processes for all state-awarded grant programs. Our efforts are drawing increasing national attention and "cutting edge" praise from other states and local jurisdictions, in addition to the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and the Southeast Center for Applied Prevention Technologies. Importantly, we are developing the foundation for sustaining this success beyond our planning period and well into the future.

As always, we invite your ideas and suggestions for continuing to improve the system and processes for promoting positive youth development and for safeguarding the positive quality of life we enjoy as Virginians. For the future we will do this by remaining vigilant and *keeping healthy and safe* those who, with our help, would continue to maintain and advance it – our children.

Sincerely,

Marilyn P. Harris

PIVOTAL PARTNERS

THE ROLE OF THE GOSAP COLLABORATIVE

In vital collaboration with the prevention leaders, program managers and specialists represented on the GOSAP Collaborative and the State Incentive Grant Advisory Council, implementation of “*Gaining Traction: A Substance Abuse Prevention Plan for Virginia’s Youth*” has built upon existing prevention efforts to accelerate progress in a more unified, more collaborative and more proven way. Virginia’s liaison with the Southeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technology – a federal prevention training and technical assistance center – has described Virginia’s prevention programs and practices as “exemplary” and “cutting edge.” From the inception of this strategic plan’s implementation phase,



the need for continued state-level leadership from those state agencies comprising the GOSAP Collaborative was viewed as not just desirable, but essential. It was evident among those involved in the planning process that this coalition, that had proved so successful during the earlier development phase, would necessarily play an even more prominent leadership and decision-making role now, if the plan's practical goals and objectives to improve Virginia's statewide youth substance abuse and violence prevention system were to be effectively realized. The lion's share of prevention funding, and most management

prerogatives affecting prevention in Virginia, derives from these same agencies. As decisions would be made about pragmatic ways to implement these strategic recommendations, the GOSAP Collaborative's interagency management prerogatives, leverage and influence would be indispensable for avoiding duplication of efforts, maximizing limited resources, attaining consensus and adopting consistent, statewide program standards. Additionally, the Collaborative's leadership role in guiding the overall implementation of Virginia's strategic vision for prevention adheres to its defined mission and goals, as stated:

Mission

THE GOSAP COLLABORATIVE WILL PRESERVE AND ENHANCE VIRGINIA'S EXEMPLARY NATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE AREA OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT BY PROMOTING AND FACILITATING WIDER USE OF MODEL PROGRAMS, DISSEMINATING BEST PRACTICE SOLUTIONS AND SUPPORTING UP-TO-DATE TRAINING AND INFORMATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PREVENTION PROFESSIONALS STATEWIDE.

Goals

To model, based upon collaborative successes achieved at the state level, the benefits of wider collaboration within and among every level of youth prevention activity ongoing within Virginia.

To sponsor statewide capacity-building training events that will bring together youth substance abuse and violence prevention coalitions, experts, and providers from all governmental and agency levels for professional networking and for learning directly from those who are most successful in the youth prevention field.

To publicly recognize the collective and personal achievements of organizations and individuals who exemplify the best attributes of Virginia's prevention system and practices, as well as those who have made notable contributions toward positive prevention outcomes that directly benefit the youth of Virginia.

MERGER OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The 16 strategic recommendations presented in the original *Gaining Traction* plan resulted from several meetings of prevention stakeholders held early in 2003 to draft language for guiding the plan's implementation. The draft was distributed for comments, revisions and suggestions to more than 70 prevention specialists, managers and government stakeholders in Virginia, in addition to Virginia's State Incentive Grant Program (SIG) liaison at the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

Following this review period and publication of the plan in the fall of 2003, the GOSAP initiated the process for implementation,

chiefly involving member agency representatives of the GOSAP Collaborative and the SIG Advisory Council to direct the implementation process. During a series of meetings among the Collaborative's implementation teams held through 2004 and continuing into 2005, a more comprehensive analysis of the original 16 recommendations revealed practical opportunities for combining a number of interrelated and codependent recommendations into broader goal statements that were assigned to specific implementation task groups. The chart on pages 3 and 4 depicts the merger of the 16 plan recommendations into six broader goal statements as follows:

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

STRENGTHENING COALITIONS/COLLABORATION

GOAL 1

The GOSAP Collaborative will coordinate and integrate data collection systems among its member state agencies and other agencies to create a centralized source of community profile data for youth substance abuse and violence prevention that will be made available according to zip code via the Internet to all state-, regional- and local-level prevention specialists, students, researchers, grant applicants, community planners and citizens-at-large for the purposes of strengthening local coalitions, facilitating community-based needs assessments, targeting areas of high need, efficiently allocating funds, improving cross-site program evaluations and supporting greater use of collaborative, evidence-based model prevention programs statewide.



CENTRALIZED INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

GOAL 2

The GOSAP Collaborative will create a functional, centralized Web-based resource to support the information needs of substance abuse and violence prevention program planners, grant seekers, grant managers and service providers working at the state, local and community levels throughout the Commonwealth.



COMMON LANGUAGE

GOAL 3

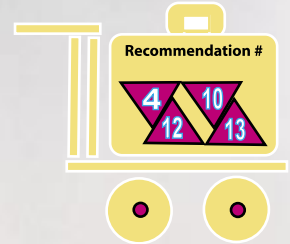
The GOSAP Collaborative will research, develop, publish, distribute and otherwise promote the use of common definitions and prevention terminology within Virginia's prevention community, in order to enhance communication, understanding and consistency among grant seekers, grant managers, and service providers involved in funding applications, evaluations, reporting, training and the provision of technical assistance for all state-level, grant-funded programs.



MANAGEMENT CONSISTENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

GOAL 4

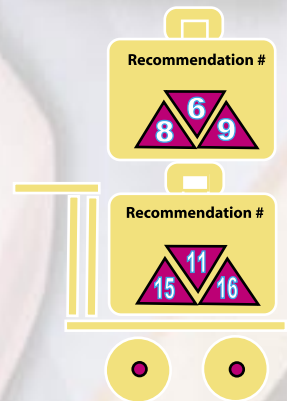
The GOSAP Collaborative will provide state level leadership for the establishment of common standards for prevention programs, management oversight and best practices that will set forth standards of acceptable performance, process standards for sustaining successful evidence-based programs and evaluation standards for the fidelity of program implementations as mandatory conditions of new or continued funding under the grant-making authority of its member agencies.



PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

GOAL 5

The GOSAP Collaborative will use the evidence of successful prevention practices, programs and professionals, as demonstrated by state and local recognition programs, an annual statewide conference and/or other means, to develop and deliver a public awareness campaign that persuasively tells the “prevention works” story to a statewide audience. It will leverage the extensive school and community outreach and information dissemination efforts of the Departments of Motor Vehicles and Fire Programs by diffusing specific knowledge in existing and new public educational materials regarding the causal link between substance use and its prevalence in the occurrence of deadly household fires and preventable traffic fatalities.



FORMALIZED CAPACITY BUILDING

GOAL 6

The GOSAP Collaborative will establish an effective means for identifying, sharing and maximizing state agency training resources earmarked for evidence-based model programs, or similar funds, that may be pooled to create/sustain statewide professional development courses for prevention practitioners. In addition to supporting professional development opportunities in an annual statewide conference, the Collaborative will support an increase in the rate of certification among prevention specialists by identifying all such courses that award continuing education credits, or that are eligible for certification by professional accrediting organizations.



PLAN UPDATES

Specific updates and changes made to the *Gaining Traction* plan since its adoption in 2003 include the revised alcohol, tobacco and drug use incidence statistics. The most recent data find that in Virginia:

- *The mean age for first-time use of marijuana is 13.87 years of age.*
- *The mean age for first-time use of alcohol is 12.98 years of age.*
- *The mean age for first-time use of tobacco products is 12.51 years of age.*
- *Twenty percent of eighth-graders reported using alcohol in the last 30 days.*
- *Cigarette smoking in the last 30 days was reported by 14.3 percent of eighth-graders.*
- *Marijuana use in the last 30 days was reported by 8.1 percent of eighth-graders.*
- *Getting alcohol was reported to be “very easy” by 28 percent of the youth surveyed.*
- *Getting cigarettes was reported to be “very easy” by 46 percent of the youth surveyed.*

These revised indices resulted from a state-level youth survey, with findings recently released and reported by the Virginia Tobacco Settlement Foundation and the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services – both members of the GOSAP Collaborative. This updated information suggests that, despite Virginia’s continued success in the prevention of ATOD use among youth overall, and its continued national leadership in youth substance abuse prevention, the early experimentation and onset of substance use among Virginia’s youth generally occurs at a very early age. This points to the need for extending the reach of Virginia’s successful prevention programs, especially in a way that can influence decision-making among an even younger population cohort.

In addition to these data updates, the progress of the plan’s implementation thus far has given rise to a number of other noteworthy developments:

Virginia’s Community Profile Data

The Community Profile Data (CPD) source provides one-stop, user-friendly Web access to critical social indicator data for state- and local-level prevention needs assessments, planning, benchmarking and measuring progress. Specifically, the CPD:

- *provides community planners with consistent, easily accessible data to help them self-assess their local needs;*
- *provides public and private organizations with uniform, comparable data to use in developing grant applications;*
- *provides state agencies that distribute state and federal funding with data to help target resources to areas and issues with the greatest needs;*
- *develops training resources for appropriately using data to assess community needs;*
- *links program developers and administrators to research-based, best-practice guidance on program and service strategies;*
- *sets benchmarks for prevention activities; and*
- *monitors progress toward achieving benchmarks, performance indicators and outcomes.*

In addition to data that is useful for preventing youth substance abuse and violence in general, the CPD soon will include data that research has linked with gang recruitment, to assist localities in the growing effort throughout Virginia to stop the spread, and mitigate the presence of violent

youth gangs. Additionally, it will be expanded to provide information on programs operating in Virginia to prevent gang involvement, or intervene early in the lives of at-risk youths. Consistent with the GOSAP Collaborative's Goal #1 on Page 3, the CPD easily provides local data, customized to the user's search criteria. Virginia is well ahead of other states in delivering consistent data, from multiple sources, to professionals in the field, parents, students and anyone who needs a reliable, recent and accurate profile of any Virginia community.

Status: 70 percent complete

Management Standards and Protocols

In keeping with implementation Goal #4, members of the GOSAP Collaborative are nearing consensus about elements of a best practice model for local prevention programming, and for standards concerning the management of funded grant programs at the state level. Elements of the emerging model for prevention programming are:

- *Comprehensive community prevention needs assessments using relevant objective data;*
- *Measurable, results-oriented goals and objectives;*
- *Use of evidence-based programs and approaches to address locally-identified needs;*
- *Fidelity in the implementation of evidence-based programs and approaches;*
- *Collaboration and communication among prevention agencies and organizations in the planning and strategic implementation of programs and services;*
- *Plan for sustaining effective programs/projects beyond initial grant funding periods;*

- *Evaluation designed to document implementation and measure outcomes; and*
- *Consumer involvement in planning, implementation and evaluation.*

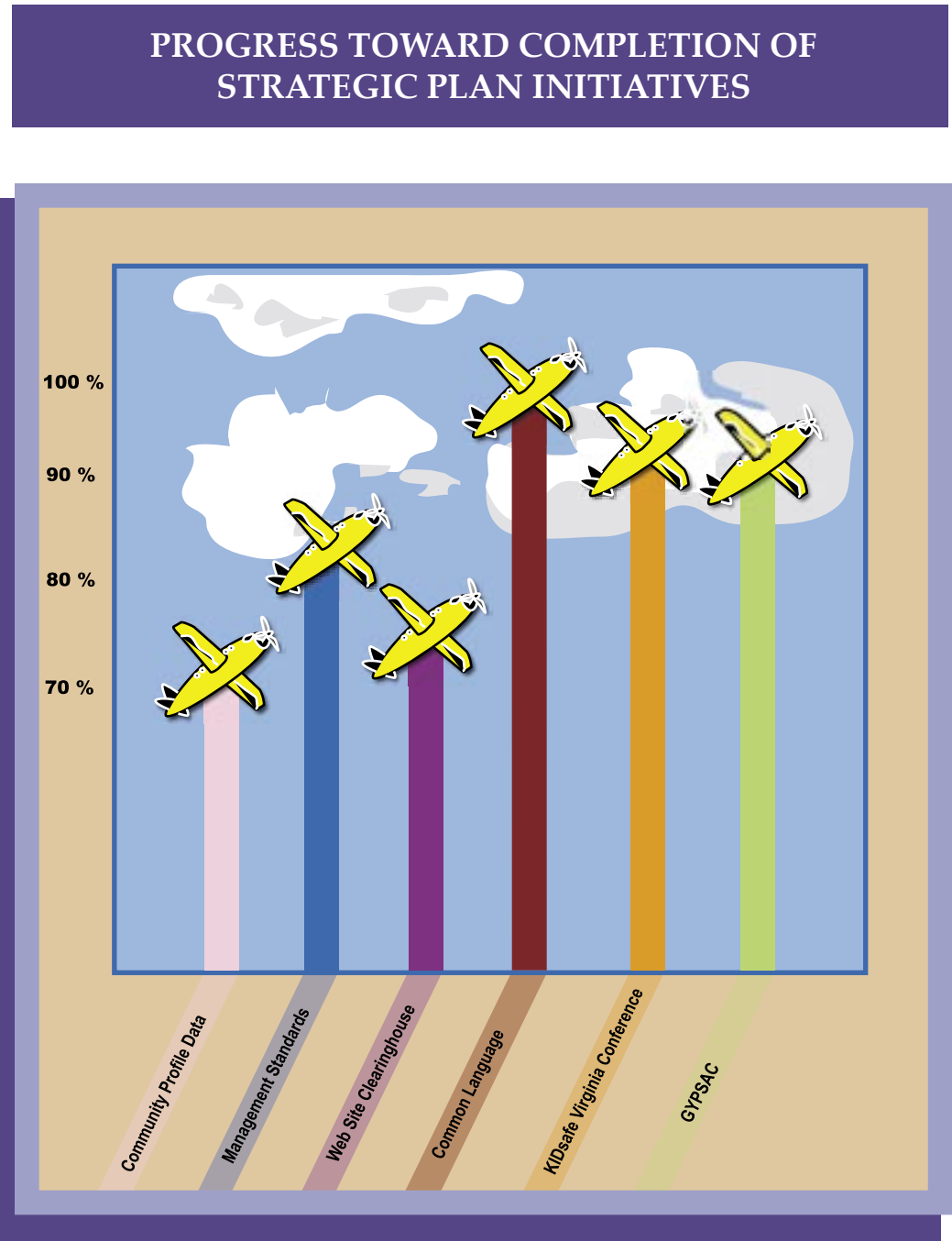
GOSAP Collaborative agencies and organizations are responsible for managing competitive and non-competitive grant programs that fund many types of prevention initiatives throughout the Commonwealth. They also are developing consensus about best practice standards for the management of these grants. Preliminary standards for prevention grants management at the state level are:

- *Requests for proposals (RFPs) that establish clear expectations for grantees, support evidence-based programming and ensure accountability for outcomes.*
- *Requirements for grantees that are consistent with evidence-based prevention principles.*
- *Advancement of effective prevention programming that requires both adherence to evidence-based prevention principles, and the conduct of activities that strengthen the capacity of grantees.*
- *Requirements for greater accountability, accompanied by high quality training and technical assistance that builds grantee capacity to employ evaluations capable of assessing the fidelity of implementation, and of outcomes, using appropriate measures.*
- *Cross-site evaluation using common data elements that become the norm for prevention grant programs in Virginia.*

Creating this best practice model for prevention programming, and the standards for prevention grants management, are significant contributions to Virginia’s more unified, more collaborative, and more evidence-based approach to ensuring the consistency and the effectiveness of prevention practices.

The illustration below is a graphical depiction of progress made toward completion of the management standards and the other updated strategic plan activities that are described in more detail in the pages that follow.

Status: 85 percent complete



Web Site Clearinghouse

In February 2005, the GOSAP's revised Web site was launched with substantial changes. More than half of the content and features of this site are now rendered in service to a centralized information clearinghouse function on behalf of Virginia's statewide prevention community. In addition to providing general agency information about the GOSAP itself, this Web site provides, or will soon provide, detailed information about the ongoing work of the Collaborative, downloadable copies of the *Gaining Traction* plan and other publications produced by the Collaborative, information about grants available from the member agencies, an online calendar of available training opportunities, Virginia's Community Profile Data, a common resource library, and hyperlinks to member-agency Web sites, as well as external sites, where additional prevention resources exist. This Web site may be viewed at www.gosap.governor.virginia.gov

Status: 75 percent complete

Common Language Development

A prevention "primer," titled *Our Common Language: A Quick Guide to Prevention Terminology in Virginia*, was unveiled at the November 2004 KIDsafe Prevention Conference. The publication contains basic prevention terms, concepts and principles, as well as key sources of more in-depth information. As it identified the need for such a publication, the GOSAP Collaborative noted the challenge for prevention professionals, and for community leaders involved with prevention efforts, to understand and use prevention science as it emerges from a variety of sources and is disseminated through multiple agencies and organizations. Although there is consistency in prevention research findings, the terminology and concepts used to describe this body of knowledge differ somewhat across agencies and organizations. The "common language" set forth in the *Quick Guide* is intended to enhance understanding

within the Virginia prevention community and to improve communication with the broader public. This publication may be requested from the GOSAP, or accessed online at www.gosap.governor.virginia.gov

Status: Complete

State Incentive Grant

Virginia has completed its fourth year of a State Incentive Grant (SIG) cooperative agreement with the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). The Virginia SIG project used a three-pronged approach to strengthen Virginia's prevention system: 1) providing grants to local community prevention coalitions, 2) directing a SIG Advisory Council and, 3) managing a capacity-building initiative.

Twenty local prevention coalitions were awarded three-year grants of up to \$360,000 to implement model prevention programs, to implement environmental strategies to change local norms and policies related to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, and to enhance local prevention planning efforts. The funding period for these grants ended September 30, 2004. Final evaluations of the projects are pending. However, it is known that more than 100,000 Virginians were directly or indirectly impacted by these projects. The following are highlights from the final evaluation report that align with the goals and objectives found in the *Gaining Traction* prevention plan:

- *Across the 20 sub-grantees, the SIG collaboratives functioned well throughout the three-year SIG initiative. Collaborative members across sites reported such factors as trust among members, active and diverse membership, ongoing evaluation of achievement by members, and formal communication networks and processes as central features of their success. In addition, most of the 20 collaboratives saw an increase in active memberships over*

time, a positive sign that interest and commitment remained high throughout the initiative. Members also reported outcomes consistent with the goals of the program (e.g., increased interagency collaboration, less duplication of services, and development of community-wide prevention plans).

- *Local sites demonstrated success in choosing and implementing research-based programs to meet the needs of their local communities. During the first year of implementation, communities were operating 57 programs, with 74 percent of them research-based programs. By year three, communities were operating 138 programs, with research-based programs accounting for more than 83 percent.*
- *All sites met or exceeded their stated goals and objectives for those programs and strategies that were fully implemented.*

Using carryover funding, each of the local projects planned and implemented activities involving local communities of faith. Activities ranged from training members of faith communities in evidence-based prevention programming to holding community summits and conferences. In addition, funding was approved by the CSAP, this fiscal year, to allow sub-recipients to implement local capacity-building projects.

The SIG Advisory Council has provided advice and consultation during implementation of the Virginia SIG project and was instrumental in developing the *Gaining Traction* plan. Representatives of approximately 40 public and private prevention organizations have served on the SIG Advisory Council. Although the official SIG project will end in the coming year, the Advisory Council has been a valuable sounding board for gauging local impact of statewide developments in prevention policies, practices and proposals.

The GOSAP will maintain this important advisory role by establishing the GOSAP Council.

Funding also was approved by the CSAP, this fiscal year, to continue offering prevention training courses. Sustaining professional development through such capacity-building training activities is identified as one of the plan's strategic recommendations. Prevention Basics (PB) training has been available to prevention organizations that contracted for the complete three-level training or, if better suited, for a specific course level that was deemed appropriate for identified participants. During the SIG funding period, capacity-building training was provided via a GOSAP contract with James Madison University.

PB I training focuses on basic prevention theory and practice (developed in 2001); **PB II** focuses on the basics of performing needs assessments and evaluation (developed in 2002); and **PB III** focuses on coalition maintenance to sustain community prevention efforts (developed in 2003). The number of prevention professionals trained, to date, in each of the three levels is:

PB I: 672 PB II: 410 PB III: 179

Status: Complete

KIDsafe Virginia Prevention Conferences

KIDsafe Virginia is the Commonwealth's comprehensive program for improving the public and personal safety of Virginia's youth. The initiative complements and expands upon existing community- and school-based efforts to improve the public and personal safety for children and adolescents.

KIDsafe Virginia has continued to serve as an effective prevention initiative during its second year of implementation.

Extraordinary demand for KIDsafe Virginia resources has required the reprinting of both the *Parent Guide to Personal Safety for Children* and the *Parent Guide to Crime Prevention for Teens*. Demand for the parent guides has always exceeded supply. More than 370,000 copies of these publications have been disseminated. Additionally, in response to continued high demand, the KIDsafe Virginia School Safety Toolkit, containing a variety of publications focusing on school safety, crisis and emergency response, juvenile law, drug detection and crime prevention, is now available on a CD-ROM. Before the electronic version was created, approximately 4,000 Toolkits were distributed to school Principals, Superintendents, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Coordinators, and School Resource Officers. At a number of statewide events, 25,000 KIDsafe Virginia information bags were distributed, and collaborations with other state agencies resulted in an additional distribution of more than 65,000 informational brochures on topics pertinent to child safety. Major private contributors to the KIDsafe Virginia program include the Allstate Foundation, Wal-Mart, and VateX, Inc.

Evaluations for components of the KIDsafe Virginia program have yielded consistently positive findings. In a recent study focusing on the implementation of personal safety and crime prevention lessons in one locality, feedback from students, classroom teachers and law enforcement instructors was uniformly favorable. Teachers judged lessons to be valuable, and universally reported they would recommend the curriculum to other teachers. Student outcomes were achieved both in terms of learning objectives and greater use of crime prevention/personal safety strategies.

To build upon and extend this success, GOSAP joined with the Southeast Center for Applied Prevention Technology to cosponsor the first statewide KIDsafe Virginia Prevention Conference in November of 2003. The conference was highlighted by the official release of the *Gaining Traction* strategic plan to the 230 participants in attendance. This partnership

acknowledged the fact that one of the most effective ways to keep Virginia's kids safe – and healthy – is to keep them away from the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; to keep them Drug-Free *and* Crime-Free.

An overflow crowd of 365 prevention professionals attended the second KIDsafe Virginia Prevention Conference, held on November 16, 2004 in Richmond. Promoting the theme “*Advancing the Plan*,” that year's conference was dedicated to taking action to implement the prevention plan that had been introduced during the prior year's conference.

One of the most effective ways to keep Virginia's kids safe – and healthy – is to keep them away from the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; Drug-Free and Crime-Free.

— KIDsafe Virginia

Sponsored by the GOSAP Collaborative, with support from the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center based at Virginia Commonwealth University, the conference featured a keynote address by nationally renowned prevention researcher Richard Catalano and – reflecting an emphasis on the Commonwealth's many prevention achievements – showcased more than two dozen Virginia prevention initiatives in roundtable and workshop presentations and displays. Many prevention leaders and other supporters were recognized at the conference luncheon. By personal witness, Dr. Catalano publicly stated that Virginia's prevention community is leading the way for modeling effective interagency collaboration at the state and local levels, a daunting challenge that continues to confront many other states throughout the nation.

This year's third annual KIDsafe Virginia Prevention Conference will focus on mobilizing neighborhoods and communities for prevention, while fostering the development of resilient youth and families.

Status: Ongoing

Governor's Youth Public Safety Advisory Council

A cardinal tenet of effective prevention strategies is the inclusion of targeted consumers in the planning and evaluation of programs. The GOSAP has taken very seriously its responsibility to listen to the people it serves. Listening experiences with Virginia's adolescents over a two-year period have resulted in an official report from the Governor's Youth Public Safety Advisory Council (GYPSAC), titled *Virginia's Youth Speakout! About Crime and Public Safety*.

GYPSAC was created in 2003 to establish a formal dialogue between young people and safety professionals about school violence, gangs, substance abuse, and other school and community safety issues. Sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education, and in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Public Policy, GYPSAC held six *Speakout!* sessions in 2003 and 2004, including one at the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center and another at the Youth Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Project Conference in Farmville, Virginia. Representing the voices of 550 students from 79 high schools, the GYPSAC report identified the most pressing safety concerns of youth, examined contributing causes, and it offered recommendations and strategies for improving youth safety. The full report may be requested from the GOSAP.

The top ten safety concerns identified by the Council are:

1. *Physical violence, often associated with gang activity, including the use of guns and other weapons.*
2. *Substance abuse, from marijuana and crack cocaine, as well as over-the-counter medications.*
3. *Underage drinking by students.*
4. *Reckless driving, including speeding, drag racing and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.*
5. *Unprotected sex, contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, as well as teenage pregnancy.*
6. *Racism, which often leads to violence.*
7. *Harassment of students and social cliques through bullying and sexual intimidation.*
8. *Tobacco use by underage youth.*
9. *Theft of personal property.*
10. *Vandalism of school property, personal property and community facilities.*

GYPSAC's recommendations for improving youth safety are listed below. In the full report, numerous specific strategies are listed for each recommendation. GYPSAC students advised the Governor to:

- *Increase positive role models and adult guidance.*
- *Diminish boredom and increase positive activities.*
- *Combat distorted media images.*
- *Eliminate access to drugs and alcohol.*
- *Build understanding and acceptance of others.*
- *Enhance consistency of rule enforcement in schools.*
- *Boost self-esteem and reduce negative peer pressure.*
- *Lower youth stress and depression.*

This report, produced by the voice and hand of Virginia's teens, clearly demonstrates the wisdom of prevention practitioners continuing to recognize the direct connection between youth substance abuse, youth violence and gang activity. This connection is clear from the expressed public safety concerns of the GYPSAC teens. Note that the first four concerns, plus concerns numbered six through eight – highlighted by shaded boxes – all involve substance abuse and/or violence. Better explaining this link, and emphasizing the tremendous difference that adequately funded prevention programs can make for improving the overall safety environment for all citizens, is important for making a clearer case for prevention among policymakers, parents and the general public.

Virginia's prevention community is leading the way for modeling effective interagency collaboration at the state and local levels.

— Dr. Richard Catalano

Status: Ongoing

SUSTAINING OUR COLLABORATIVE PROGRESS

By any objective and tangible measure, Virginia has been remarkably successful in accomplishing the *Gaining Traction* strategic plan objectives it has undertaken to implement. The key to this progress has been the commendably high degree of collaboration achieved within Virginia's statewide prevention community, especially among those state, regional and community-based organizations that conceived this plan's vision and wholeheartedly participated in its implementation, both in word and in practice. In many respects, the implementation of these strategic objectives has gone substantially beyond what anyone thought – at the outset of our collective journey – could be practicably achieved within and across agency boundaries. In hindsight, probably all would now agree that this has been our most important lesson. Our experience in propelling Virginia's youth substance abuse prevention system forward has proven, once again, that tremendous heights can be attained through the power of commitment, collaboration and active coalitions.

As far as we have come together, we have farther yet to go, not only to complete our strategic plan implementation process but, more importantly, to preserve the means and methods we have developed for ensuring continuous and proactive improvements in Virginia's statewide system for youth substance abuse and violence prevention on an ongoing basis. In this regard, the GOSAP Collaborative is preparing an interagency Memorandum of Agreement among its member state agencies to sustain this essential collaboration. This is consistent with implementation goal number four on page four of this status report.

The coming year will provide the opportunity to collaborate with the Virginia Department of Education in the Prevention Through Information (PTI) initiative. Funded with a newly awarded U.S. Department of Education grant, this project will create timely Web access to school crime and violence data, and it will provide extensive training to school and community professionals in data-driven prevention planning. PTI, along with Virginia's Community Profile Data, will give local residents unprecedented access to critical data and opportunities to build capacity for prevention planning and evaluation.

Also on the horizon is a training partnership between the GOSAP and the Virginia Department of Education to present statewide training about the Hawkins and Catalano Risk and Protective Factors Framework to Commonwealth's Attorneys, school personnel and law enforcement officials throughout Virginia. The training will be offered in at least 30 locations around the state.

Going forward, it is equally necessary to sustain progress by examining our experiences with a critical eye. The GOSAP is in the process of compiling a report of "lessons learned" from the multi-year implementation of our State Incentive Grant. From this analysis and review of the 20 SIG-funded model programs, we will cull "success stories" that will be useful for telling how local service providers overcame challenges, preserved program fidelity, built or expanded community coalitions and worked with families. For sure, these compiled stories will benefit Virginia's statewide prevention community, but they also will provide valuable insights for prevention providers and technical assistants in other states and localities throughout the U.S., especially program implementers in those states that recently have entered into a State Incentive Grant cooperative agreement with the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

We will continue efforts to more effectively tell the prevention story to policymakers, as well as civic and business leaders and the at-large public, by implementing a statewide marketing plan and public awareness campaign, consistent with goal statement number five on page four of this report. We invite all Virginians, and anyone else committed to the healthy development of children and families, to join us as we continue with these promising efforts.



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